1-36. (cancelled).

37.   (new) A method, for use in a contact center environment expected to receive contacts that are not required to be serviced by contact center agents in real-time, wherein the contact center environment has associated therewith a forecast of contact load expected to occur in each of a set of future time periods within a given future time range, comprising:

(a)   identifying a given service level goal for a given future time period within the given future time range of the forecast, the service level goal describing a maximum amount of time that may occur between receipt of a given contact and handling of the given contact, wherein the given contact comprises a part of the contact load expected to occur during the given future time period;

(b)   for the given future time period of the forecast, using the given service level goal identified for that given future time period to identify a number of time periods over which the contact load in that given future time period may be distributed; and

(c)   for the given future time period of the forecast, applying a given function to the contact load to distribute the contact load for the given future time period over a given set of the identified number of time periods;

wherein one or more of steps (a) – (c) are performed by one or more electronic processing devices.

38.   (new) The method as described in Claim 37 wherein the contacts that are not required to be serviced by contact center agents in real-time include at least one electronic communication.

39.   (new) The method as described in Claim 37 wherein the contacts that are not required to be serviced by contact center agents in real-time include at least one written communication.

40.   (new) The method as described in Claim 37 wherein the given function is based one or more factors selected from a set of factors including: a number of contact center agents expected to be available to service the contacts during the given set of

identified number of time periods, an amount of time that a contact center agent may allocate to service contacts, an amount of excess capacity that a contact center agent has available, a backlog goal, an agent average handling time, and agent schedule adherence.

41.   (new) The method as described in Claim 37 further including the step of: generating a staffing requirement for the given future time period.

42.   (new) The method as described in Claim 37 further including the step of repeating steps (a)-(c) on an iterative basis for additional given future time periods within the given future time range to distribute the contact load for each additional given future time period.

43.   (new) The method as described in Claim 42 further including the step of: with respect to a given future time period, aggregating the contact load that has been distributed into that given future time period as a result of applying, on an iterative basis, the given function in steps (a)-(c).

44.   (new) The method as described in Claim 43 further including the step of: generating a staffing requirement for the given future time period as a function of the aggregate contact load that has been distributed into that given future time period.

45.   (new) The method as described in Claim 43 further including the step of: generating a staffing requirement for the given future time period as a function of the aggregate contact load that has been distributed into that given future time period and an agent average handling time that has been forecast for that given future time period.

46.   (new) A method, for use in a contact center environment expected to receive contacts that are not required to be serviced by contact center agents in real-time, wherein the contact center environment has associated therewith a forecast of contact load expected to occur in each of a set of future time periods within a given future time range, comprising:

(a)   identifying a given service level goal for a given future time period within the given future time range of the forecast, the service level goal describing a maximum amount of time that may occur between receipt of a given contact and handling of the given contact, wherein the given contact comprises a part of the contact load expected to occur during the given future time period;

(b)   for the given future time period of the forecast, using the given service level goal identified for that given future time period to identify a number of time periods over which the contact load in that given future time period may be distributed; and

(c)   for the given future time period of the forecast, applying a given function to the contact load to distribute the contact load for the given future time period over a given set of the identified number of time periods;

(d)   repeating steps (a)-(c) on an iterative basis for additional given future time periods within the given future time range to distribute the contact load for each additional given future time period; and

(e)   with respect to a given future time period, aggregating the contact load that has been distributed into that given future time period as a result of applying, on an iterative basis, the given function in steps (a)-(c); and

wherein one or more of steps (a) – (e) are performed by one or more electronic processing devices.

47.   (new) The method as described in Claim 46 further including the step of:

(f)   generating a staffing requirement for the given future time period as a function of the aggregate contact load that has been distributed into that given future time period and an agent average handling time that has been forecast for that given future time period.

48.   (new) The method as described in Claim 46 wherein the contacts that are not required to be serviced by contact center agents in real-time include contacts selected from a set of contacts that include: electronic communications and written communications.

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49. (new) The method as described in Claim 48 wherein the electronic communications include at least one e-mail.

50. (new) The method as described in Claim 48 wherein the electronic communications include at least one fax.

51. (new) Apparatus, for use in a contact center expected to receive contacts that are not required to be serviced by contact center agents in real-time, wherein the contact center has associated therewith a database that includes a forecast of contact load expected to occur in each of a set of future time periods within a given future time range, comprising:

code executable on a processor to identify a given service level goal for each given future time period within the given future time range of the forecast, the service level goal describing a maximum amount of time that may occur between receipt of a given contact and handling of the given contact, wherein the given contact comprises a part of the contact load expected to occur during the given time period;

code executable on a processor that, for each given future time period of the forecast, uses the given service level goal identified for that given future time period to identify a number of time periods over which the contact load in that given future time period may be distributed;

code executable on a processor that, for each given future time period of the forecast, applies a given function to the contact load to distribute the contact load for the given future time period over a given set of the identified number of time periods;

code executable on a processor that, with respect to each given future time period, aggregates the contact load that has been distributed into that given future time period, and

code executable on a processor that, with respect to each given future time period, generates a staffing requirement for given future time period as a function of the aggregate contact load that has been distributed into that given future time period and an agent average handling time that has been forecast for that given future time period.

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